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HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

Wednesday, August 31, 1938

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "FOOD SHOPPING TIPS." Information from the Bureau of Agricultural Economics, United States Department of Agriculture, and the Consumers' Counsel, Agricultural Adjustment Administration.

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Listeners, the family meat bill stands a pretty good chance of being lower than it has been. At least, that's what I gather from the food-shopping tips just arrived by the morning mail. Meat prices apparently reached their peak level for 1938 the middle of August. Now they are on the way down. Ordinarily meat prices are highest in August or September. Lamb prices usually start down early in August and beef prices begin falling later in the month. The downswing in the price of pork usually doesn't get underway until late September. But this year pork may start down earlier. The biggest drop in meat prices usually comes during the last three months of the year. Thrifty housewives plan to serve lamb dinners in December because that's the month when lamb is usually cheapest. Pork and beef prices are lowest in February.

For the rest of 1938, lamb, pork, and better grade beef will all probably be more plentiful than last year. The total amount of beef in this country will probably be about the same as in 1937 since this year we have smaller amounts of lower grade cattle. More pork is expected on the market after the middle of September.

You can serve your family fried chicken these days without having qualms about extravagance. For poultry marketings have increased sharply and wholesale prices of fresh dressed chickens have dropped fairly low. Chickens are a better buy than fowl at most markets. The last report I have says that fryers or 3-pound chickens were selling wholesale in New York at 10 cents a pound less than last year, while 4-pound roasting chickens were about 5 cents a pound lower. However, these recent drops in wholesale prices have not brought the same drops in retail prices.

Now about seasonal vegetables. Shipments are beginning to come from the late-producing States, which furnish the last crops of the season. (Fall is creeping up on us, listeners.) These States produce about a third of ^{our} annual celery requirements, about a half of our yearly fresh cabbage, and almost three-fourths of the potatoes and onions that go to market. Naturally, the prices of these four vegetables are lowest in October or November at the peak of the harvest. Prices go up in the late winter and early spring when the markets draw their supplies from storage. The late States will probably have larger crops of cabbages and onions this year than last, but fewer potatoes.

8/31/38

You can expect very nice Colorado green peas and cauliflower in the markets these days for only those that rate a grade of U. S. No. 1 or better are being shipped. The AAA has a marketing agreement to this effect for Colorado vegetables. The best peas, you know, are bright green and fresh looking; the pods are velvety to the touch. (If you want to keep them green and fresh tasting, cook with the cover off the kettle and only 8 or 10 minutes until just tender.) Fine cauliflower is white or creamy white. The heads are heavy and compact with fresh green outer leaves. (Brief cooking keeps cauliflower from turning dark and saves its fresh taste.) The size of the cauliflower head and the number of leaves left on the head has no relation to the grade.

From now until late October most of the eggplant for sale in eastern markets will come from New Jersey. The New Jersey crop this year is about a fifth smaller than last year. The best buy in eggplants has an even dark color and no blemishes. Wilted, shrivelled or soft plants often are bitter and poor in flavor.

Michigan and New York are having large cucumber crops this year. These two States send the most cucumbers to market this month. As you know, cucumbers for salad should be fresh, firm, bright in color and even in shape. Overmature cucumbers are good for some kinds of pickles, however.

Are you one of those people who believe that no green salad is perfect unless the salad bowl was first rubbed with garlic? Well, here's some garlic news. Not quite so much garlic is expected this year as last. Most garlic on the market comes from California and the garlic crop there isn't quite so big this year. Here's a tip on buying garlic. Choose the dry firm heads with unbroken outer skin, never any that is soft or spongy.

More cantaloups are on the market than a year ago.-- more cantaloups and less watermelons for the rest of the melon season. The watermelons are pretty well gone now but you can buy cantaloups through October.

There is more butter this year than last, probably will be for the rest of the year. On August first milk production reached a new high level for this time of year. Wholesale butter prices didn't change much during August and aren't expected to go up as much as usual during the first half of the year.

Finally, a note or two on canned vegetables. Less canned corn predicted than we had last season, but more canned tomatoes.

That's all the shopping tips for now. More in a couple of weeks.
